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SUBJECT: GYPSY TERROR PROVOKES MORE DEBATE THAN SOUL-SEARCHING

¶1. (U) Summary. An August 8 protest against "Gypsy Terror" in eastern Slovakia has opened a rift in Slovakia's nationalist movement and shown once-again that - where Slovakia's large and impoverished Roma community is concerned - even the "responsible" parliamentary parties face a delicate balancing act between recognizing voters legitimate fears about crime and giving credence to ingrained racial prejudices. (End summary.)

¶2. (U) Approximately 200 people who gathered to protest what they called "Gypsy terror" in the eastern Slovak village of Sarisske Michalany on Saturday, August 8. According to the website of Slovenska pospolitost (Slovak Fellowship, a far-right civic organization) the protest was in reaction to attacks by members of the Roma minority on local residents and the government's failure to protect Slovak citizens and the Slovak nation from "Gypsy terror". (In the past year individual Roma from a nearby settlement murdered a shopkeeper and seriously injured a pensioner in the village. In both cases the assailants have been detained and remain in prison.) The protesters threw rocks and bottles after police detained three leaders of Slovenska Pospolitost for organizing a mass-gathering without a permit. In the ensuing action, police detained approximately 30 people, all of whom were released within hours. Although Slovenska Pospolitost promoted the gathering through its web page, the organization insists it did not "organize" the protest. Approximately 25 sympathizers of the Czech far-right Worker's Party (Delnickej strana) and 10 Hungarian skin-heads joined the protest.

¶3. (U) Inhabitants of the village were generally supportive of the protesters and a petition drive has begun to have the Mayor - who worked closely with police - removed from office for his failure to deal with Roma from the nearby settlement. Several local residents were quoted in media reports saying they have nothing against Roma per se, but that they live in fear of those Roma from the nearby settlement who regularly commit crimes against property and display violence while high on glues and solvents.

¶4. (SBU) Reactions from political parties followed a mostly predictable line. Interior Minister Robert Kalinak and Deputy Prime Minister for Minorities Dusan Caplovic, both from the ruling Smer party, defended the police action as appropriate. The co-ruling Slovak National Party (SNS) repudiated any act of violence against a Slovak citizen and said criminals must be dealt with no matter the color of their skin. MP Jan Kovarcik of the co-ruling HZDS criticized the police intervention for having made heroes of the extremists. (Comment. Kovarcik has called on Kalinak to resign several times recently for his "failures" with respect to the police. Most pundits interpret his criticism as related to HZDS weak position in the coalition in the final months before elections must be called. End comment.) Opposition MP Vladimir Palko, head of the Conservative Democrats of Slovakia (KDS) and a former Interior Minister, proposed that statistics on crimes committed by the Roma should be regularly released so that police and policy makers can more effectively tackle the problem and gauge results. Palko warned that decent people suffer from crime at the hands of Roma and their

legitimate concerns should not be only the province of extreme parties.

¶5. (U) Before he was detained, Slovenska Pospolitost's nominal leader, Marian Kotleba, called on his followers "to prevent the further mutilation of our people by the Gypsy hordes," and criticized the SNS for failing to protect the Slovak nation while it has been in government for the past three years. Kotleba called for the creation of a new nationally-oriented party to challenge SNS and protect the Slovak people. (In 2002, when nationalist voters were divided between two parties, SNS failed to win more than 5 percent of votes and was out of Parliament for four years.)

¶6. (U) Slovenska pospolitost was originally formed as a nationalist party in 2005, but became a civic organization in 2006 after the Supreme Court declared it's political objectives to be in contravention of the Slovak constitution and dissolved it. It is the only time the Slovak judiciary has dissolved a political party. In November 2008, Kalinak's Interior Ministry moved to dissolve the civic association Slovenska pospolitost, but at the beginning of July, the Supreme Court canceled the move, ruling the Interior Ministry dissolved the association without a valid legal reason. Kalinak has promised to study the decision and find a way to enforce Slovenska pospolitost's dissolution as soon as possible.

EDDINS